

HOW IT FEELS TO BE BLIND

How in Which the Burden of Sightlessness  
can be lightened

By

C. Arthur Pearson

From World's Work, April, 1914



**M.C. MIGEL LIBRARY  
AMERICAN PRINTING  
HOUSE FOR THE BLIND**

# HOW IT FEELS TO BE BLIND

THE WAY IN WHICH THE BURDEN  
OF SIGHTLESSNESS CAN BE  
LIGHTENED

BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON

**I**N beginning this talk to the readers of THE WORLD'S WORK I have to make a purely personal statement, which I make only because it has a very direct bearing upon the really important part of what follows.

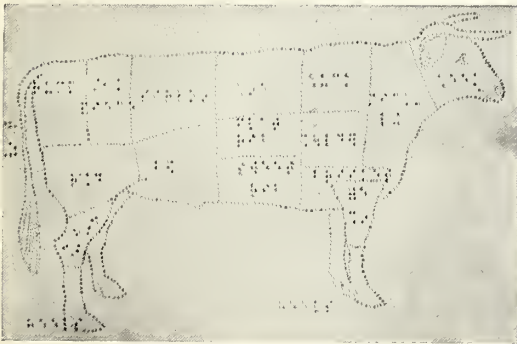
Some six years ago my sight began to fail me. I consulted specialists, and after trying in vain the effect of resting my eyes, underwent operations upon them five years ago but to no purpose; for in spite of the best advice obtainable at home and abroad my sight has since then continued to deteriorate steadily and is now of little service. I can no longer read nor can I get about without guidance, except in quite familiar surroundings.

We have all heard that "a fellow feeling maketh wondrous kind," and the loss of my sight has led me to think a great deal of others in the same plight, but most of whom are not so fortunate

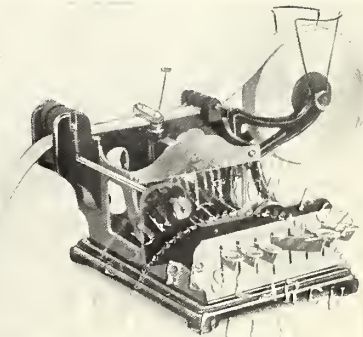


THE NEW PREMISES OF THE BRITISH  
AND FOREIGN BLIND ASSOCIATION

as I am. For to have a fair supply of this world's goods does much to lighten such a burden as I have to bear. For example, I can revisit beautiful and familiar places at home and abroad, and feel that keen joy which lovely scenery affords; for I am so lucky as to have a very retentive visual memory,



AN ILLUSTRATION IN BRAILLE  
Diagram of an ox with joints of meat  
described



A BRAILLE SHORTHAND TYPEWRITER  
On it blind people can write 100 to 160 words  
per minute





EMBOSSING BOOKS FOR THE BLIND  
JOHN FORD, A BLIND PROOF-READER



MISS MORRISON, A BLIND OPERATOR PREPARING BOOK-PLATES  
She is reading with her left and operating the machine with her right hand

and can still in my own way see beauties of mountain, lake, and woodland, which are, in reality, only a memory. Reading is the one unfailing resource of the blind. We read with our finger tips by the aid of embossed type, an illustration of which appears on these pages.

Braille—the invention of a Frenchman, Louis Braille—is the best system of this embossed writing, and by far the most prevalent in the British Empire. It was introduced into this country by that great blind philanthropist, the late Dr. Armitage, who founded the National Institute for the blind, of which I have lately become honorary treasurer.

The institute exists mainly for the purpose of making books, magazines, and newspapers in Braille. It is infinitely the largest producer of these in the British Empire, and is the only one which does the work by machinery on a considerable scale. Some Braille books are produced by hand, by blind workers, by kindly sighted folk, but their work is, necessarily, very tedious, and the books made thus only begin to supply the demand which exists. In spite of the use of the most ingenious machinery which the wit of man has been able to devise, the process of making these books is slow, cumbrous, and costly—so much so indeed that Braille books cost many times as much as ordinary books, and the tragedy of this is that most blind people are very poor.

The new premises of the Institute at Great Portland Street, in London, which was recently inaugurated by his Majesty the King, will, when finished and fully equipped, enable this cost to be reduced very materially. But it must always remain far heavier than is the cost of literature prepared for sighted folk. It is to these that we must look for the help which will enable us to offset this great disadvantage.

And now let me ask you to consider for a moment what this reading with the aid of Louis Braille's invention really means to the blind.

To begin with, it has the immense importance of making them far more independent than they could otherwise be. This means much even to those who

like myself can secure the services of readers at any time, for we like to feel that we are not obliged to be dependent upon kindly help or paid service but can interest and amuse ourselves. It means that the whole wonderful world, which often he has never seen, is laid open to the blind man. It means that he is given the key to the treasure-house of fancy, wit, and wisdom. And, far more important, it means that he is able to acquire knowledge of all kinds and thus mentally to equip himself for the battle of life in which many of the blind make so brave a fight. Braille music too—which we also print—enables blind folk not only to perfect themselves in playing for pleasure, but in many cases to find occupations as musicians.

Several of the most renowned organists of the day are blind.

But I do not think I need enlarge upon this. It must be evident to you that lives so trammelled as are those of the sightless, cannot fail to find an unspeakable joy and resource in the ability to read. It is not too much to say that the emancipation of the blind began with the introduction of embossed reading. Their pleasure and their opportunities of making good in the world will increase as this reading matter becomes cheaper and more widely disseminated among them.

And now I wonder whether I have succeeded in the object with which I set out? I wonder if I have led you to feel that you would like to help in this great effort which is being undertaken to place the making of books for the blind community upon a sounder and more practical basis—to give the sightless the same opportunities as are possessed by yourself of gaining pleasure and absorbing knowledge through books.

I have almost taken it for granted that this is the case. A picture is inset in these pages. Will you kindly look at it and also at the wording behind it.

I have not asked you whether or no you will buy a book for the blind man. I have assumed that you will, and I trust most sincerely that this assumption is not too bold and that the only real question is: WHICH BOOK WILL YOU BUY FOR THE BLIND MAN?



# OUR FINANCIAL DEPARTMENT

FINANCE, INVESTMENT AND INSURANCE

## PROTECTING THE BORROWER FROM MONEY-LENDERS

**L**ORD NEWTON'S Bill for the regulation of the business of money-lending passed through the House of Lords last year and would have passed the Commons but for lack of time. The Prime Minister promised it facilities, but was obliged, to his strongly expressed regret, to leave his promise unfulfilled. This year the Bill has passed the Lords once more, and is fairly certain to complete its stages in the Commons and become law.

The changes to be made by it are not at first sight sensational. The money-lender will be required to register himself with the Commissioners of Inland Revenue "under a name which comprises his own name and his usual trade name (if any) and in no other name." Secondly he will be forbidden to do business under any other names, or at any other premises, than those mentioned in his registration. Interest will be limited to 15 per cent. per annum. Circulars will be prohibited, unless sent at the request of an intending borrower. Bills of sale or any other form of security on the contents of a married borrower's house will be illegal without the consent of his wife. Substantial penalties in fine and imprisonment are imposed on money-lenders who break these new laws, or, in the case of money-lending companies, on the chairman and the secretary.

These changes, though they may require some modification in detail, will be highly valuable. They supply a text from which a few cautionary remarks may

well be made, or re-made, for they are no new though they are both true and continually called for.

Two years ago a barrister with chambers in the Temple made the experiment of counting the money-lending circulars he received on the twenty-seven week days in one month. They came to sixteen. There was certainly no reason why a particular run should have been made on the credulity or cupidity of this man, and imagination stands appalled at the idea of the number of such circulars that must pass through the post in a year.

Professional men, clergymen, widows, tradesmen, young persons of both sexes who require to cut a dash, parents with growing families, farmers with bad seasons, an endless list, in fact, may be suitable prey for the money-lender if among his sandstorm of circulars a few grains hit the right spot at the right time.

And the cunning of it! Whatever can be done by words to represent *this* money-lender as quite different from all others, whatever can allay the suspicions, excite the too eager hopes, bewilder the trusting intelligence, or show that even money-lenders sometimes see that honesty is good policy, all is found in these circulars, with each phrase calculated to a nicety by the most skilful scoundrels out of gaol.

His name, of course, is above reproach. Of all names it is the last to raise suspicion. Neither foreign nor aristocratic, since there might cause alarm, it has the



